

aa bb name

where *aa* is either *br* bride or *gr* groom and *bb* is either *re* for relatives or *fr* for friends. The name field is obvious. Sorting this list by the entire line would first list the bride's guests followed by the grooms guests. The list would be further subdivided into friends and relatives and finally each subgroup would be alphabetized by name. If the sort was specified to start with column four, an alphabetized list of friends and relatives would be generated. Starting with column seven would alphabetize by name. Unfortunately, this arrangement makes editing labels difficult. To call up a specific label, the first six characters, including blanks, with enough of the name to uniquely identify the label would have to be entered. Putting the bride, groom, relative and friend designators at the end of the line would lose the ability to generate alphabetized lists by these categories. This points out the program's inability to sort by more than one field, which is a desirable feature.

The program's major flaw is that it allows the user to halt the program by hitting the stop key. The manual actually condones this procedure as the only way to change key output parameters such as the size of the label or the screen width for 80 column adapter boards. Key parameters of this sort should be handled under program control. Allowing an inexperienced user direct access in this fashion is only courting disaster resulting in loss of data in memory at best and improperly closed disk files at worst.

The program is written entirely in BASIC with the exception of the machine language routines mentioned earlier. The manual includes some suggestions on how to modify the BASIC portion to suit

your own needs.

Overall, this is a simple label generator and sorting program suitable for most home applications. It is rather limited as a business package particularly in a multiuser environment. The program does function rather competently after the user adjusts to its various limitations.

—Morton Kevelson

SUSPENDED

Infocom

Commodore 64

Disk

M“My systems are failing” was the message. I knew that it was serious: as screwy as the enigmatic little robot was, he wouldn't send an Interrupt Alert without good reason. Still I was busy elsewhere; several hundred citizens were dying, seismic eruptions were playing hob with the complex and it was my responsibility to repair the damage. “That robot is no longer functional” the filtering computer coldly informed me when I got around to asking for a location report. Dead. The little fella was gone.

The dysfunction of a solitary conglomeration of metal, wires and high impact plastic should not have disturbed me as much as it did, but this was Poet. No longer would I be treated to his nonsensical ramblings punctuated with dollops of common sense, his robotic wit, and his slightly skewed way of viewing the world. Losing Poet was bad enough, but, in addition, Iris was blind and Waldo was not sure how to repair her, Auda was sensing intruders in the Sterilization Chamber, and breaks were detected in the Maintenance Access. Whiz might have been able to help me solve my mounting problems . . . if on-



ly he were plugged into the correct pedestal.

In grief and despair I quit the game. Cyro-life was not worth living without Poet. Perhaps he could be repaired; but did Bambi repair his mother? It was just a warm-up round anyway; winning Infocom's *Suspended* is a marathon that requires conditioning.

Unless you've been in cryogenic freeze yourself for the last year or so, you're aware that Infocom's games are totally textual, or “participatory novels” as some have dubbed them. We're fortunate that the first practitioners of this new art form are polished, intelligent, witty, and imaginative as, for example, Michael Berlyn is. Berlyn is the author of *Suspended*, and he has lavished a good deal of complexity and eccentricity into his game. I recommend it. Further, in my judgement, no intelligent gameplayer's collection is complete without at least one Infocom game.

In *Suspended*, you take the role of the central mentality of the Contra Complex; you have been lifted into a state of limited

REVIEWS

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)Poet, report
PC: Cynolink established to Poet.
PC: Full report from POET
POET: Moving through Beta Repair
We're getting nowhere fast, glider, but at least we're not getting there
slowly.
The glider is not in motion.
POET: As far as I know, I'm Zen on inventory.
POET: Sensory pads detect no abnormal flow.

AUDA INTERRUPT: From what I can hear, I've arrived at the Small Supply Room.

)Waldo, report
PC: Cynolink established to Waldo.
PC: Full report from WALDO
WALDO: Moving through Weather Monitors
This large area has smooth walls.
In the room with me is Iris (in motion).
WALDO: My extensions grasp nothing.

POET INTERRUPT: As much as I can be anyplace, I'm here at the Gamma Repair.
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cryogenic suspension, half-awakened into a world in perpetual collapse. Your immediate objective is to keep the underground complex running smoothly; your overall objective is to reset the all-important filtering computers.

To help you overcome the rapid-fire problems that come your way, you have been given six robots to command. You have also been given a game board with pieces that will help you keep track of the complex and your robots.

The robots all have different functions, specialties, and quirks. Auda monitors all auditory stimuli. Sensa reports on the seismic and vibratory patterns of flux in the city. Iris' function is to keep tabs on the various control and weather monitors. Whiz, the brains of the outfit, is able to plug into the various advisory pedestals. The Heinleinian Waldo is the workhorse; with his multiple extensions he can do most anything. Then there is Poet. As his name suggests, Poet is slightly more playful, though no less rational, than his peers. With comments like "I'm Zen on Inven-

tory" and "As much as anyone can be anyplace, I'm here," Poet relieves tension and frustration, a walking martini.

The other robots are not complete stiffs either. Waldo, when asked to perform a task he considers difficult, will reply, "You have just entered the zone whose boundaries are those of the wishful thinker." Meanwhile, Iris might be plaintively sending, "It would be real nice if I got repaired."

Speaking of Iris, a hint or two: at the beginning of the game, Iris is isolated from the others (because a crucial corridor is blocked) and is blind. The first order of business is to repair Iris. With Iris functioning, the game is, well, *playable*. To get to her, to pass the impassable, a wedge is required. I will say no more.

The player has a vocabulary of six hundred words with which to communicate with his or her robots; the text itself, of course, contains a much wider vocabulary. We'll close with Poet's reply when asked to describe Iris: "Iris is the personification of petite beauty. As the old timers say, *The young lady always wore mink*

*While her visual circuits went
'blink'
The young man's delight
Night after night
Was her blushing a bright shade of
pink.
—Robert J. Sodaro*

HOMETAX *Learning Source Inc.* *C-64 (CP/M Capable)*

Learning Source, Inc. is a California firm that has begun to launch an operation that they hope will completely revolutionize the retail computer field. It is their intention to set up nationwide franchises which will in effect make them, as they put it, "to the computer field what MacDonalds is to burgers."

What they have in mind is not the ordinary franchise operation. Their plan goes something like this. The retail computer business, according to president George Hoss, is filled with people who do not necessarily know anything about computers. How many times have you gone into a computer store and asked a salesperson a question that (s)he was not able to answer? It is Learning Source's concept to thoroughly train its franchises before turning them loose in the retail computer world.

Another aspect of their operation is something that should be of tremendous interest to anyone who has a personal computer which is CP/M compatible. They have created a new income tax program which was given a thorough checkup and imprimatur, as it were, by Price Waterhouse; it was also given a benign nod by the IRS.

An extremely powerful program created by accountants and geared to the 1040 form, *Hometax* has been written in such a way as to make it quite simple for anyone to